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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

**ON THE USE OF SUPRA-SEGMENTAL FEATURES OF ENGLISH AND
PREFERENCES OF ENGLISH VARIETIES IN ESTONIA WITH SPECIAL
REFERENCE TO THE MASTER'S STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TARTU**

MA thesis

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ABSTRACT

It is known that native speakers of English (or other advanced speakers of English) can easily forgive foreigners their accents in sounds but take their intonation at face value. Therefore, the methodology of the teaching of English pronunciation should suggest more effective materials to help students learn necessary supra-segmental skills consisting of stress patterns, rhythm, intonation and phrasing. This thesis will explore how master's students studying English and EFL master's students assess and use their pronunciation of English when delivering presentations, reading papers and discussing their field of study with fellow master's students and which variety of English they suppose they use. In addition, the aim of this thesis is to find out how familiar the master's students of the University of Tartu (UT) are with the use of prosodic features in spoken English and how much attention they pay to their pronunciation of English.

In order to get the results, an interview consisting of a spontaneous informative conversation together with two reading passages is undertaken with 36 Master's students of UT. As a result, this thesis comes to the conclusion that the Master's students of UT are not familiar with the use of the prosodic features of English and are not consistent in using English varieties (General American or Received Pronunciation). The results lead to the necessity of amplified emphasis on pronunciation in English-language instruction in Estonian schools.

The thesis consists of an introduction, theoretical background in two chapters, empirical data analysis with discussion and conclusions that can be drawn from the research. The introductory part introduces prior researches on similar topics of English pronunciation in Estonia and background information on the importance of awareness of the varieties of English. Chapter 1 includes the theoretical aspects and functions of supra-segmentals in pronunciation. Chapter 2 gives an overview of variety-based prosodic features that exist in spoken English varieties that are under observation. The Empirical chapter describes the findings based on the interviews conducted among 36 UT master's students in 2012 and discusses the results in terms of predictions and expectations of the research. The conclusion of this thesis sums up the results and makes generalizations about the necessary teaching aspects of prosody and varieties of English.

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INTRODUCTION

The availability of English-language media has contributed to the continued growth of the prominence of English around the world. For the past two decades, after the end of the Soviet era and together with the opening of borders to the western world, Estonia has witnessed rapid changes in the exposure to the English language in schools, Internet, media, videos, TV and direct communication. In addition to the command of English in general, an input has been made to the pronunciation of English among non-native speakers.

It is a known understanding that the acquiring of a new language is a complex process. Also, there are Estonian Bachelor and Master's students who get acquainted with English pronunciation through the exposure to English in their everyday life and thus, use it in their academic life. However, they tend to focus on "what" they say rather than "how" they say it while also aiming at adopting a near-native accent of English. The "what" here includes the vocabulary and grammar studied in school. The "how" of the language is mainly left for the speaker to adopt on their own, with an exception of one semester of practical phonetics for the students majoring in English with the focus on learning to self-monitor their speech.

The alteration of English native accents is complex. According to Wells, ".../ acquiring a new accent can be seen as adding new, late rules to our existing phonological competence" (1982:111). Thus, one simply needs to add new rules of a foreign language to the already existing native or other foreign language. This requires motivation to consistently add information and pay attention to the accent, involving adaptation (ibid). Adapting and generalising aspects of a foreign language pronunciation may cause some difficulty in terms of using the rules of the target language appropriately. Therefore the idea of an utterance

might be misunderstood. This, however, can be avoided by following the norms and rules set in the target language, which can be done by studying and practising them.

A significant area in speech includes meanings of utterances that are dependent on the target language's characteristics, in this case on the English language pronunciation. A person is capable of setting their emotions and tone into a written language by their vocabulary and grammar, mainly including the carefully chosen words, the word order and using punctuation marks. It is also possible to emphasize ideas and statements by using bold or italics. Sarcasm, agitation, irony, love, disappointment, lack of interest, expected response and commenting, etc. are the hidden subtext behind texts, either written or spoken. Nevertheless, written texts could still be ambiguous and one can only make assumptions on the writers' intentions. In spoken language, on the other hand, people use prosodic features to express the subtext behind the chosen vocabulary and grammar.

Prosodic features of pronunciation are expressed by those linguistic characteristics that are not based on segments in spoken language. Segments are defined as the smallest distinct parts of a spoken utterance, especially with regard to vowel and consonant sounds rather than stress or intonation (OED 2012). Thus, supra-segmental features are the other set of characteristics in spoken language, such as use of stress, rhythm, intonation and phrasing along with the pauses. This thesis will concentrate on the prosodic aspects of the pronunciation of English.

There are a number of studies carried out earlier in the Department of English in the University of Tartu (UT) on the previously defined segmental aspects of English pronunciation (Kostabi, Asu, Kull, et al.) which will be looked at in more detail in the second part of this introduction. Considerably fewer research papers have been written on supra-

segmental elements or prosody of English. The segment-based studies concentrate on sounds, sound combinations, typical mistakes in sounds, etc. The awareness and use of prosodic features consisting of stress, rhythm, intonation and phrasing of a language have not been researched to such an extent and there is little knowledge on how much emphasis should be put on that in Estonian schools.

This research paper focuses on finding out prosodic problems in oral communication performed basically by learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Estonia. The hypothesis of this thesis is based on an assumption that master's students of UT are not very well familiar with the use of prosodic features in spoken English and thus do not pay much attention to their pronunciation of English. It is thought by the author of the thesis that students, who are majoring in English, referred to as master's students for Academic Purposes (EAP), pay more attention to their pronunciation of English and know the main characteristic differences between pronunciation of American and British English. Whilst students, who study English as a foreign language, or more conveniently English for Specific Purposes (ESP), do not pay attention to the pronunciation and varieties of English. This, in turn, leads to the supposition of the necessity to teach more English pronunciation aspects in school.

Thus, the aim of the thesis is to find out if the hypothesis is true and if so, how the students' attention could be drawn to "how" along with "what". It is known that native speakers of English (or other excellent speakers of English) can easily forgive foreigners their accents in sounds but take their intonation at face value. Therefore, the methodology of the teaching of English pronunciation should suggest more efficient materials how to help students learn necessary supra-segmental skills. For this purpose it is planned to find out how EFL master's students assess their pronunciation of English when making presentations,

reading papers and communicating on their specialty with fellow master's students and which variety of English they think they use.

With the purpose of knowing more about possible problems that may occur in language acquisition, a broader look at the importance of different varieties of English is taken. It seems that the influence of the varieties has changed quite a lot in a short period of time. The reason for different varieties having a different impact on language learners is not merely local but international. International English as one of the varieties which has developed with the spread of English all over the world does not have the same pronunciation, grammatical and lexical elements as in any other country where English is considered as a second language. Barbara Seidlhofer agrees that because of the international use of English, it is shaped both by its non-native speakers and native speakers (2005:339). Therefore, language changes with its users. There are several varieties of English that people from different backgrounds speak. We can distinguish regional variation of a language, "which involves differences between one place and another" and also "social variation, which reflects differences between one social group and another (this can cover such matters as gender, ethnicity, religion, age and, very significantly, social class)" (Collins 2008: 2). Thus, it can be said that also in Estonia, the English language has its variations.

Furthermore, whether it is the regional difference or social variation of a language, the connection depends on the exposure of these varieties to the speaker. The contact with English-speaking countries has increased due to high level communication tools and the ease of travel. For instance, looking at the numbers of students studying in English-speaking countries in the year 1989/1990 there were zero university students going to study in the USA, but in 2011/2012 there were 241 students who used exchange programmes to study in the US

(Institute of International Education: 2012). Such exposure to native English will probably affect one's pronunciation greatly.

Moreover, the connection to near-native English takes place not only through Estonians going abroad. There are native speakers (NS) of English who live, study or visit Estonia so that local people are in close contact with them. As the native speakers merge with the local social groups, the English language will develop with the following generations. This also means that the language has become rooted into that society. Thus, there are non-native speakers of English (NNS) who speak in American English accent opposed to British English which is mainly taught in Estonian schools (the reasons for British English and its pronunciation considered as a standard are explained in the following paragraphs). It could also be the case that NNS speak English with strong Estonian accent. These aspects and the manners of "how" Estonians speak English have not been profoundly researched.

In order to research the manners of how Estonians speak English, a more detailed look is put on the varieties of English spread in Estonia. There are two main varieties of English pronunciation used: General American (GA) and Received Pronunciation (RP). General American is the variety of English spoken in most parts of the US, particularly with reference to the lack of regional characteristics (OED 2012). It can be heard in most of the films, TV series, news and lyrics coming from the United States and is spoken by two-thirds of Americans (Wells 1982:118). Received Pronunciation, on the other hand, is considered as the overt prestigious accent spoken in England (ibid) and stated as the *de facto* standard accent which is considered appropriate for public use (ibid:104). It is defined as "the standard form of British English pronunciation, based on educated speech in southern England, widely

accepted as a standard elsewhere” (OED 2012). This variety is also known to be used as BBC English, the Queen’s English and Oxford English.

One of the persons, genuinely contributing into research and explanation of the Estonian learner’s use of English pronunciation in terms of varieties was Oleg Mutt. It was stated by Mutt (1979) that RP was regarded as the unofficial standard of English in Great Britain and in most countries where English is taught as a foreign language (1979: 47). This statement continues to ring through – RP is taken as a standard to which teachers of English follow and therefore most students are using RP also in the early 21st century. According to Mutt (1979), the four reasons why RP has been adopted as the teaching norm are the following:

1. Tradition and sentiment of the pronunciation of the language deriving from London, the capital of England.
2. RP has been recorded, studied and described more thoroughly than any other type of English which makes it easier to be taught.
3. RP is regulated and standardised.
4. RP acts as an intermediary between the representatives of all accents of English.

Another reason, mentioned by Leili Kostabi (1995), is the fact that for many decades the opportunity for Estonians to hear native speaker's English was to occasionally turn on the BBC and that left a mark on the today’s older generation of teachers (Kostabi 1995, referred in Kull 2006:6). Thus, we can add this to Mutt’s list as the fifth aspect for RP being considered as a standard of English.

On the other hand, these principles suggest that most Estonian students speak with near-British accent (RP). However, it is supposed that the accent taught in school is obtained by non-native speakers of English as easily as could be expected. Before continuing with the current research, a look will be taken at the previous studies made on similar topics in more detail. In 1995, Kostabi recorded oral presentations of 100 student candidates for the UT Department of English during their entrance examinations. The results show that both GA- and RP-related forms were spoken inconsistently, GA features were mostly lacking (Kostabi 1995, referred in Kull 2006:15).

Two years later, in October 1997 a survey was carried out by a master's student of UT English department Eva Liina Asu, aiming to find out the attitudes towards pronunciation and usage of either GA or RP among first-year students majoring in English. The title of this thesis was „British or American English: a study of Estonian students' attitudes to pronunciation“.

That research was carried out at the time when the varieties of English that Estonians were exposed to, had made a shift from RP into GA. The research concluded that with the influence of American English coming from the media, films, etc. the students were mostly confusing their pronunciation incidence between the standardized RP and the newly spread GA. Moreover, the students claimed that at the gymnasium level there was no strict requirement to stick to one variety only however, their attention was drawn to mixed-up forms of the two variants. On the other hand, it seemed that the teachers themselves were often not able to tell the difference between the characteristics of GA and RP. The author's recommendation to the teachers of English was to get more familiarized with the differences and share the possibility to speak whichever variety with their students. She also stated that

perhaps consistently using one variety only should not be insisted on because the results showed that most students mix the two varieties anyway (Asu, 1997:29).

Moreover, Asu's suggestions (1997) are proven to be rather accurate to be perceived in school as Evelin Schapel explains in her research, conducted 7 years later in 2002 at the Department of English at UT, with the special notion of the teaching of English pronunciation at the gymnasium level. The results, in short, give an idea of how British English is mainly taught in schools of Tartu. She learned that in general, the aim is not to teach only one variety. This research also showed how it might not be so reasonable to keep the two variants, near-RP and –GA, well apart in the teaching of English and, on the contrary, some international varieties of English, such as Mid-Atlantic English or International English, ought to be taught (Schapel, 2003:52).

Furthermore, Rasmus Kull provided an in-depth comparison between the changes of trends throughout the years, contrasting the results of Kostabi's research (1995), Asu's results (1997) and conducting a new survey of his own in 2006. He carried out the survey mainly concentrating on grammatical and lexical differences of GA and RP and only briefly on the phonological aspects.

As a result of the comparison, there were 66 respondents who thought they spoke British English, 12 who spoke American and 11 respondents who said to speak mixed variants of English in 2006. In 1997, however, the numbers were 13 British, 10 American and 16 mixed English speakers, accordingly (Asu 1997, referred in Kull 2006:18). Adding Kostabi's (1995) results of analyzing the interviewees' oral presentations, we learned that both varieties were inconsistently used and GA was used less than RP. As to the teaching of different varieties in schools, according to Kull's comparison (2006), 22 students told Asu that they

were taught British English and 17 claimed to having been taught mixed English. The results of Asu's study (1997) with 60 students being taught mainly British and 2 students American variety, the pronunciation types compared to 27 mixed varieties in 2006 indicated the need to carry out a new research in 2013. All in all it can be said that since the connection to GA speakers started to increase in the early 1990s, the change from the use of varieties is considerable and it seems to change all the time.

Taking this into account, the here presented research was carried out in year 2012, with special emphasis on the prosodic features of English which have been left somewhat unnoticed in earlier years. This study, though, asks the similar question of finding out which variety the students think they use and analysing what they actually use. Through this research, we will be able to learn whether the use of prosodic features corresponds to what is regarded as correct or whether more practice should be suggested to the teachers of English in Estonia.

The abovementioned issues make up the core research question for this thesis. The thesis consists of an introduction, theoretical background in two chapters followed by empirical data analysis in Chapter 3 with discussion and conclusions that can be drawn from the research. The introductory part introduces a few previous researches on similar topics of English pronunciation in Estonia and background information why it is important to be aware of the differences of varieties of English. Chapter 1 includes the theoretical aspects and functions of supra-segmentals in pronunciation. Chapter 2 attempts to shortly concentrate on the variety-based prosodic features that exist in spoken English. The Empirical chapter 3 describes the findings based on the interviews conducted among 36 UT master's students in 2012 and discusses the results in terms of predictions and expectations of the research. The

conclusion of this thesis sums up the results and makes generalizations of the necessary teaching aspects of prosody and varieties of English on the basis of the results of the thesis.

CHAPTER 1. PROSODIC FEATURES OF ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION

In this chapter, the aspects of spoken language will be addressed. In general language instruction it is taught that along with vocabulary and grammar there are rhythm, stress, phrasing and intonation that provide the listener with better understanding of the speaker's message, intention and emotion. With the purpose of making oneself understood, it is important to be aware of and apply these aspects of pronunciation to our speech. It seems necessary here to specify the term. These four aspects of pronunciation are called supra-segmental features of pronunciation which is often equated with the term prosody. When the prosodic aspects of speech are familiar and taken into account, the speaker can self-monitor the how-expression which they utter.

The British Council Teaching English site states the necessary aspects in teaching English for successful oral communication to be the teaching of proper use of stress and rhythm, as well as intonation (2012). In the author's view, adding the aspect of proper phrasing to the previously stated principle, systematic pronunciation training is required with a special emphasis laid not only on segments (sounds) of speech but also on supra-segmental features of speech that will pass on the speaker's competence or incompetence. Duration and melody of speech, the length of pauses and stress along with rhythm suggest the speaker and listener of that.

The definition of prosody has been specified throughout time with its first appearance in Ancient Greek and noting the word in poetry as "the patterns of rhythm and sound used in poetry" (OED 2012). In linguistics, the term prosody is defined as the reference to those properties of speech that are not deriving from the segmental sequence of phonemes

underlying human utterances (Nooteboom n.d). David Crystal, on the other hand, defines the supra-segmental features of phonology as “the residue of the non-segmental phonology, which cannot be described by reference to a single segment (phoneme) as it continues over a stretch of utterance such as extra loudness, or it requires several segment reference of different parts of the utterance) for example the use of the breathy voice on vowels (1979: 33)”. In short, prosodic features are all the characteristics of spoken language which are left over from the phoneme pronunciation.

Crystal continues emphasizing the importance of prosodic units in spoken language as the organized prosodic tone-units consisting of voice pitch (direction and range) or intonation, rhythm, stress of a word or sentence. These are the core elements of non-phonetic markers of speech that provide the most general level of prosodic data, possibly equivalent to the notion of sentence in grammatical analysis (1979: 35). As grammar gives us information about sentence structure, prosody gives the information about speech melody as a whole. This data provides us with the correct meaning and intended understanding of an utterance.

Prosody has specific functions in speech and therefore in the methodology of the teaching of communication is considered as an important aspect of spoken language. Several authors have attended the notion in their way, thus, Crystal (1979) points at special functions carried out by prosodic features. These functions are semantic, attitudinal, psychological, social and grammatical and in case some of these features are lacking, the functions cannot be detected in an utterance, either.

Firstly, prosodic features carry a semantic function, where the speaker notifies the listener of the most important part of the statement by signalling the meaning of the discourse through emphasizing an intended lexical item of utterance. By way of example it could be the

use of level-rise pitch prominence or stress. According to Crystal, for an NNS, this is a helpful tool to distinguish generalizations from certainties.

Secondly, the attitudinal function of prosody is expressed by signalling personal emotions by the classical distinction between denotation and connotation (ibid: 36). In this case, the term denotation is the direct meaning of a word or expression and connotation is the secondary meaning of a word (OED 2012). Emotions such as surprise, anger, puzzlement etc. are expressed via pitch movement.

The third aspect known as the psychological one has to do with the matter of remembering and perceiving the utterance, which is believed to be in direct connection of the prosodic feature to the utterance. This is helpful when some certain words are more readily recalled given their syntactic and lexical features.

Moreover, the fourth function of prosody is more important for the EAP speakers of English in the matter of the academic/professional status because the social function of prosody includes the socio-linguistic characteristics of the speaker such as class, sex, professional status (Crystal, 1975, referred in Crystal 1979: 36). This function is crucially important when, e.g. it is the intonation of the utterance that lets the dialogue partner know whether a response is expected or no further comment is needed.

The grammatical function as the fifth function of prosody carries the role of expressing the contrast between morphological or syntactic meaning in a grammatical way, e.g. singular and plural or positive and negative, etc (ibid: 36).

Thus, these functions indicate the importance of prosodic features for a speaker in getting a message across as well as listener in receiving the intended message. These features used in an incorrect manner could cause misunderstandings. However, there are characteristics

of prosody which are necessary to be learned. Having observed the functions, it seems crucial to study the prosodic features in more detail.

1.1. Stress

Firstly, utterances can vary with the use of stress. The definition of stress is a particular emphasis or importance given to a particular syllable or word in speech, typically through a combination of relatively greater loudness, higher pitch, and longer duration (OED 2012). Stress can be either weak or strong and can be viewed from the perspective of what the speaker does to produce the sound and how the produced sound is perceived. Producing the stressed sound requires using more muscular energy. From the perceptual point of view, the stress of an utterance is usually determined by prominence [which will be marked in the below examples – by capital letters]. “Stressed syllables are recognized as stressed because they are more prominent than unstressed syllables” (Roach 2000: 94).

Prominence is dependent on four factors such as the loudness and length of the syllables, pitch along with the movement of pitch and the quality of neighbouring vowels. For the sake of this thesis, it is important to emphasize the factor of the occurrence of other words in an utterance as the key in positioning stress. Stress can be regarded as being isolated and not isolated. Just as intonation in isolation is mechanical, looking at stress without the real use with other items is artificial. There is a difference between the use of stress in phrases such as ‘bad-‘tempered and a ‘bad-tempered ‘teacher (ibid: 109).

These aspects of stress are used consistently by both NS and NNS. One can be taught the rules of using stress in certain items but speaking of a unit it is easier to adopt the proper

pronunciation by listening to the proper use of stress patterns. Yet, in order to do so, the aspects must be familiarized. For example,

(1) The MOST disturbing factor of the situation was the insincerity of HER behaviour.

The most diSTURbing factor of the situation was the insincerity of her beHAViour.

The most disturbing factor of the situation was the insinCERity of her behaviour.

The heightened stressed syllables give a new connotation to the meaning of the utterance. In the latter example, emphasis is put on the agent of the activity rather than the attitude of the speaker.

1.2. Rhythm

Furthermore, meanings of utterances are affected by the second non-segmental characteristic feature of pronunciation which is rhythm. Rhythm is used in poems and verses where the similar flow of the utterance, dependent on rhythm, is as important to the phrase as the meaning. Defined as “the measured flow of words and phrases in verse or prose as determined by the relation of long and short or stressed and unstressed syllables” (OED 2012), rhythm can be perceived in two different ways: either preserving the original melody or in monotone. This idea suggests that two different utterances can share a common property - the same rhythm (Nooteboom, S. n.d). In an academic situation, rhythm makes it easier to follow a presentation and facilitates the realisation of interest in a presentation. Suggesting that there are, e.g., nonsense words put in a line, rhythm implies to the similarity with another intelligible phrase.

(2) PAramPArampaRAMpampaRAMpaRAMpara

This shows that it often is rhythm that can get the meaning of an utterance across to the listener because as it is possible to make an illogical utterance *sound* logical, the intelligible sentence is to be more likely better understandable spoken with the proper rhythm.

Peter Roach (2000), on the other hand, expands the use of rhythm discussing English rhythm as detectable in the regular occurrence of stressed and unstressed syllables and therefore English is considered to have stress-timed rhythm. This implies that the times from each stressed syllable to the next will tend to be the same without the notion of the syllables superseding the unstressed syllables. Some other languages are supposed to have syllable-timed rhythm such as French and Estonian.

Speaking partially rhythmically or with a lighter degree, rhythm depends on the context of speech. The use of strong and weak syllables makes neutral informal speech different from the rhythm of equally stressed syllables in slow speech (ibid: 134). Observing the example by Roach as to the relationship between strong and weak elements in “twenty places further back” it can be seen that the stress of the first syllables of the words determines the stronger and second syllables – weaker stress. Speaking slowly indeed brings out the rhythm, but in rapid conversational style the use of, e.g., the first syllable of the word “twenty” may be pronounced stronger than those of the following words.

Roach admits the difference of aspects of speech in public speaking and conversational language by stating “/.../ sometimes we speak very rhythmically (this is typical of some styles of public speaking) while at other times we may speak arhythmically (that is, without a rhythm) if we are hesitant or nervous (ibid: 137). Bearing that in mind, the possible nervousness in public speaking can be hidden with the proper use of rhythm. Teachers in school often clap their hands or beat time for rhythm mainly when the stress-timed rhythm is

aimed at. Although Roach claims that the evidence of a truly stress-timed rhythm is not strong (ibid), more recent studies testify to its incidence and therefore the necessity for the teaching of rhythm will be researched for ELF learners.

1.3. Intonation

Furthermore, intonation is the marker for the listener to understand more easily what kind of message or information the speaker is trying to convey and without producing any tone changes in speech, it would be mechanical (Roach 2000: 183). One of the distinctive features of intonation described in handbooks on phonetics is variation of pitch in the speaker's voice. Pitch variation is one of the most significant aspects of speech defined as "the degree of highness or lowness of a tone" (OED 2012). Pitch variation is something that is recognizable because it is very rare that people speak at an unvarying and steady tone of voice. It is important to note that this thesis attempts to discuss pitch movement that carries linguistic information. In different situations, such as riding a horse, without the controlled aspect of speech, the pitch makes a lot of sudden rises and falls (Roach 2000: 135) and therefore this paper will be looking only for those aspects that are linguistically significant. In addition, it is important to recognize that the term is used in reference to the subjective sensation and to the objectively measurable which is the physically measurable rate of vibration of the vocal cords and fundamental frequency (ibid: 151).

Moreover, according to Crystal (1979: 35), pitch can be divided into two aspects - direction of pitch and range of pitch. In a specific phonological unit pitch can fall, rise, stay level or combine these previous features so that the directional tones are usually isolated as one system of intonation contrastivity, e.g., fall-rise or rise-fall in a syllable. But in terms of

range, these tones may vary, seen as separate systems of contrast, e.g., using the falling pitches from a relatively high, mid or low key. The sentence meaning is mostly dependent on the placement of the dominant pitch change and the flow of intonation. For instance, in an utterance with the following pitch use we can see one possible way to distinguish the prominent part of the utterance from the less prominent one:

(3) *The most disTURbing factor of the situ/ation was the insin\CErity of her behaviour.*

The direction of pitch in this utterance is rising first and then, in the second part, falling. Yet, the range of the intonation is what is making the utterance more dominant in meaning. Therefore the syntactic function of the utterance is dependent on the intonation and carries also the attitudinal function. This is put to use in any non-conversational utterances, such as given in the following example, in research community as well.

(4) *In order to get the re/SULTS, it is needed to take \NEW measures and not stick to the out\DATED methods in cell studies.*

Similar cases are easily noticed in tag questions, where an intonation marker indicates whether the utterance is performing the role of asking the listener for confirmation (falling) or information (rising).

(5) *There are 4 more people consent with the interview/, aren't there?*

(6) *You did not pass the test,\ did you?*

Using rising tone (5), the mood is set as being hopeful and positive, looking for response. Using falling tone (6), the attitude of disappointment and expecting a negative response can be found.

However, there are several functions that intonation carries and one of the explanations easy to follow by learners has been concluded by Roach (2000). He, in turn, divides the

functions of intonation into 4 categories. It is important to be seen that these functions may overlap in spoken English:

- Attitudinal function that enables speakers to express emotions and attitudes in their speech. This is adding a special meaning to spoken language. Hereby, it seems important to explain that the attitudinal function of intonation may occur in unintentional offence or expression of joy given in inappropriate moments. Emotion can be expressed involuntarily or voluntarily and the target of the emotion can be either what is being said or something external. Such a misleading view can be overcome by learning English intonation.

- Accentual function is the support for the tones in syllables which are intended to be made prominent and the placing of tonic stress marks the most important syllable of the tone-unit. One of the positions of the tonic syllable is the last lexical word, either a noun, verb, adjective which suggests the accentual significance. *I want to know where he's travelling to*, and since the word *to* does not carry a lexical meaning, the word *travelling* is stressed.

- Grammatical function is meant to support the grammatical and syntactic structure and the information the intonation carries by helping the listener realize clauses and sentences and their boundaries; difference between statements and questions, etc. In short, it helps an ambiguous sentence become less ambiguous with the use of proper intonation. Roach gives an example:

(7) *Those who sold quickly made a profit.*

(7.1.) *Those who /SOLD quickly made a profit*

(7.2.) Those who sold /QUICKLY made a profit

This can be understood in two ways: A profit was made by those who sold quickly (7.2.) and secondly, that a profit was quickly made by those who sold (7.2.). The proper use of intonation differentiates main and relative clauses, indicates sentences expecting a response by changing the intonation of the sentence ending from falling to rising, etc.

- Discourse function consists in the fact that intonation can signal to the listener what is to be taken as new and already given information or whether there is a contrast or link to a specific material and what kind of response is expected. For instance, looking at dialogues in isolation the meaning and understanding is completely different compared to when looked at within the context.

A: "This research requires a bigger sample".

B: "Need to look into it more".

Pronouns "this" and "it" are not easily understood without the previous context and expectations to the response or attitude are passed with intonation.

Obviously, intonation may have even more functions and details all native speakers of English are able to use naturally but the foreigners must learn. Since there is a way to differentiate the aspects and functions of intonation, one can presume that the use of these aspects could be taught and learned. Indeed, it will improve the fluency of spoken English when users become aware of the rules and the awareness will increase through training. Nevertheless, Roach (ibid: 153) also emphasizes that the only really effective way to use intonation is first, when a child acquires a language and second, for the adult learner to get the

help by the native speakers and through imitation. However, it would be difficult for an adult learner to acquire all the aspects without any training whatsoever.

1.4. Phrasing

Continuing with the fourth feature of prosody based on Crystal's views, we learn that the prosodic configurations are organized by the combination of the features of pitch direction and range; and rhythm and pause (Crystal 1979: 35). He also introduces the fourth prosodic phenomenon to be called a tone-unit, primary contour, sense group, etc. (ibid: 35). Tone-units expound the meanings over the accompanying 'verbal' meaning and provide prosodic data of a sentence. Put in plain, using the abovementioned features in units (not in isolation), tone-units help create a meaningful utterance. Phrasing is mostly detectable with the proper pausing even without the use of punctuation marks.

(8) While eating/ my dog/, my cat / and I /watched TV.

The slant lines in this case mark the segmentation of an utterance into the tone-units. Without proper phrasing the sentence meaning would be unintelligible or ambiguous.

Phrasing is a crucial part in reading English aloud (as a foreign language). NNS of English, who use English professionally, read materials in English. Often these passages are not easily understood by a NNS because of the complexity of the sentences in terms of vocabulary and grammatical structure. Tone-units are interconnected in reading aloud, at the same time when reading new passages the tone-unit boundaries are not always easy to find, so the text may not be fully understood. The fact that people skim texts does not necessarily mean that the text is understood. The prosodic feature of phrasing makes the: ".../ readers embed appropriate volume, tone, emphasis, phrasing, and other elements in oral expression,

[in which] they are giving evidence of actively interpreting or constructing meaning from the passage” (Rasinski n.d). Interestingly, master’s students read all sorts of texts that are important to their field of study and yet the comprehensibility of their reading is not tested in any way and therefore the understanding might not always be accurate.

Consequently, errors could occur in reading aloud by a person. Wells (1982) introduces some interesting aspects to this matter concluding that literacy influences pronunciation. Reading materials in a foreign language give an individual idea of their own on how some phonemes and units are pronounced. There are possible effects that occur in perceiving a language through reading and these effects may cause the pronunciation to be somewhat false. The first effect introduced by Wells (ibid: 107) is the spelling pronunciation. This means that a person spells the word in accordance to what is perceived to be pronounced. In terms of new and complicated words, if hearing it plenty of times, it is possible to store rules which help the spelling. This, on the other hand, has to be encouraged by reading English and listening English regularly.

Another effect that reading foreign languages may have is the hyper-foreignism. This is possible when there are inadequate reading rules. The vagueness that foreign languages have in terms of pronouncing some sounds causes foreigners to use the few rules that they in fact are aware of in the target language, to be used in unnecessary cases. For instance French /d ʒ/ is an English-type consonant and the / ʒ / is the foreign equivalent (ibid: 108). In these cases, words such as *Taj Mahal* and *raj* are pronounced with / ʒ / instead of /dʒ /, hyper-foreignism have occurred (ibid: 108).

Concluding the effects that could emerge a clear signal of being familiarised with the prosodic features is given and the errors could be avoided. Yet, these prosodic features exist in

other languages too and thus may cause some irregularities in the spoken form of a second or a foreign language. Some correlations can also be found between the prosodic differences between Estonian and English. Intonation-wise, as English majors are instructed at the UT department of English: the basic stress and intonation devices common to all native accents of English and native speakers of English stress lexical items, dividing their utterances into tone units, with a particular tune, highlighting syntactic groups, and marking the prominent syllable in the utterance by tonic accent or tonic syllable, the helpful thing for foreign students is to get familiarized and learn to control their English intonation, thus it could be possible to obtain the near-NS's intonation (Kostabi 2004).

In terms of rhythm, Estonians who are used to having their mother tongue primary stress mainly on the 1st syllable, accompanied by a secondary stress and unstressed syllables in polysyllable words, may find it rather difficult to become used to the contrast of stressed – unstressed syllables which occur in English (Kostabi CA Course materials 2012). Moreover, with the most convenient rhythm in English speech observed when stressed syllables alternate with unstressed ones and knowing that NS of English rely strongly on the stress pattern in a word to identify it when storing words under stress patterns and identifying them accordingly (Carey, in CA Course materials 2012), this requires Estonian students of English to be more aware of the differences between the rhythm-based prosodic features of English.

CHAPTER 2. ON VARIETIES OF ENGLISH THAT ESTONIAN STUDENTS ARE EXPOSED TO

Speaking and listening English as a foreign language are complex skills and together with other aspects of foreign language learning, the innumerable varieties of English that students may be exposed to, make English somewhat confusing. Estonian speakers of English are exposed to English from different regions via the Internet involving popular culture such as music, television, art as well as academically at conferences, workshops, courses etc. Therefore it is important to note that since learning a language takes place the best and fastest through practical contacts then, alongside vocabulary and grammar, foreign speakers of English (EFL speakers) also adopt the pronunciation from direct contacts to the native speakers of English.

When English is acquired as a second language, the source language interference is known to affect its pronunciation. It is a common view that students who aim to obtain near-native pronunciation of English need to be able to observe, self-monitor and correct their pronunciation and be consistent in the use one main variety. In pronunciation study, it is important to pay attention to the differences in regional varieties of English.

As already observed in the introduction above (p. 8-9), in terms of pronunciation, the two varieties of English that Estonians are mainly exposed to are British English or Received Pronunciation (RP) and General American (GA). RP and GA differ from each other by segmental variation (rhotic accent, differences in segments: vowels and consonants) and by supra-segmental (prosodic) features (stress pattern, intonation). Contrary to segmental differences between GA and RP, few authors touch upon the prosodic features of English in

terms of the varieties also. Wells (1982) noted that in addition to the segmental differences that can be found and researched, supra-segmental features of pronunciation are a crucial part of helping the hearer recognize particular accents and also the individual speakers (1982:86). However, he continues saying that it is not possible to know exactly how these features vary from accent to accent (ibid). For example, the rate of speech accents can vary also which makes people from urban areas speak faster than people from rural areas (ibid: 87). Intonation, on the other hand, is not that easy to be categorized into one variety.

Wells (ibid: 86) also agrees that accented syllables are distinctive in every native form of English and are not dependent only on stress but also pitch-prominence. More prominent words that are pragmatically more important are placed with a highlighted accent, while those that are pragmatically unimportant receive only stress (ibid: 86). Examples from varieties such as West Indians (WI) enable to observe placing pitch prominence on a word where usually NSs would not place pitch prominence, e.g.:

(9) WI: *She thinks I will /MARRY her, but I don't want to /MARRY her*

(10) NS: *She thinks I will MARRY her, but I don't WANT to marry her),*

In case of WI (9), the emphasis is set on the notion of the unwillingness to necessarily get married but leaves an open mind to wanting to commit to something other than marriage. NS (10) on the other hand, indicates to the unwillingness to wanting to marry altogether including anything else. Following Wells, one can conclude that the importance of proper stress pattern in pitch use applies for Estonians speaking English also.

Moreover, as stated in the CA course materials (2012), it can be said that while observing English and Estonian intonation differences, students cannot be presented with finely-differentiated conflicts without having a set of well-founded contrasts based on their L1

and L2 for concrete intonation patterns. Likewise, regarding RP and GA as the basic pronunciation varieties to be studied in Estonia, conclusions can be made in the relevance of speakers' knowledge about supra-segmentals and varieties of English, widely different from that of Estonian.

When discussing supra-segmental features, Wells points out that syllable entity is not equally important in all varieties of English. Different places of the syllable boundary cause words such as *shellfish* to be mispronounced as *selfish*. Consequently, a very common factor in differences between varieties and prosodic features is stressing of syllables. It is through the effects of stress on intonation that syllable is usually most readily recognized as being stressed (1982: 87), thus for speakers of English as a second or a foreign language, stress and intonation constitute an area where near-NS-like patterns are only rarely achieved (ibid: 88).

However, it is precisely the fact that using stress properly will help avoid ambiguity and support consistency in one variety. Loanwords from French are the utterances in which stress is used differently in GA and RP. GA has a final-syllable stress and RP has a first-syllable stress (Gomez n .d). Some example words are *adult*, *debut*, *brochure*, *garage*, *vaccine*. Then again there are few examples where GA has the first-syllable stress and RP the subsequent one in words such as *address*, *cigarette*, and *magazine*. Wells adds some examples with *detail*, *laboratory* with second-syllable stress in RP, opposed to first-syllable stress in GA (1982: 126).

In the matter of word-ending such as *-ate*, the length of the word (mostly in verbs) different stress patterns derive depending on the variety (Gomez n .d). Most two-syllable verbs have first-syllable stress in GA and second-syllable in RP, for example in *dictate*, *donate*, *migrate*, *rotate*.

Considering all this, it seems rather difficult to settle with one possible option of what to teach EFL students in Estonian schools. As there are different experiences and needs of students, it becomes more and more difficult for teachers to ask for an agreed use of English varieties. The question which varieties should the teachers of English teach remain. Schapel (2003) resulted in suggesting that the emphasis on RP ought to be reduced and a more international view on the teaching of English should be adopted. Also, teachers should decrease the demand for consistency in terms of varieties (ibid: 19). Kull (2006), on the other hand, explained that the respondents in 2006 seemed to be “torn between different varieties of English that they themselves and their students in particular are being exposed to (2006: 5).

Taking these findings as a basis and combining it with the issue of supra-segmental features, supposedly another way to find out and ascertain one’s NNS’s or near-NS’s competence in English, the author of this thesis conducted a research which will be presented in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 3. ESTONIAN MASTER'S STUDENTS' USE OF PROSODIC FEATURES AND VARIETIES OF ENGLISH

3.1. Aims of the research

The aim of this research as stated above is to analyze the use of supra-segmental features of English pronunciation and preferences of English pronunciation varieties (notably of RP and GA based variation) among students who study at the Master's level at the University of Tartu. The interviewees are master's students, majoring in English, referred to as master's students for Academic Purposes (EAP students) and those who studied English as a foreign language, or more conveniently, English for Specific Purposes (ESP students).

The thesis also aims to explore the use of supra-segmental elements related to pronunciation of either RP or GA, the experiences of students studying English pronunciation and whether the placement of pronunciation with additional emphasis on supra-segmental features of English is necessitated by teachers of the language in Estonia.

Finally, this thesis will juxtapose students' presumed usage of English-language variant against the variant they actually use in daily practice. Through this research, we will be able to learn whether the use of prosodic features is basically correct or whether more practice should be suggested.

3.2. The methodology and structure of the interview

The author used a research method in which the sample consisted of volunteers to participate in an English-language interview, carried out by the author. The interview

consisted of 10 informative questions and two passages to read aloud. The questions were asked and replied to in English. The correct use of prosodic aspects of the interviews is assessed both by the author of this thesis and her adviser L. Kostabi.

In passage 1, the interviewees were asked to read out a 100-word academic text from a handbook on phonetics by the British author Peter Roach (2000). In order to get an unbiased use of pauses and intonation in reading English aloud, no in-sentence punctuation marks were used in the passage. The aim of this passage was to analyse three prosodic aspects of the interviewees' pronunciation of English: rhythm, phrasing and intonation.

Passage 2 included 15 separate sentences, in which there was one word carrying the role of signalling the use of stress in spoken English. The signalling words were the ones with the difference of syllable stress in GA and RP. The aim of administering Passage 2 was to discover which English variety the subjects used in their spoken English and to compare the results with the subjects' personal opinion expressed in the informative portion of the interview (question 7). The use of varieties in passage 2 and the response to question 7 tested the insight of the interviewees' knowledge about the use of stress in spoken English and their awareness about the differences between pronunciation elements of GA and RP.

In order to receive answers to the questions about who speaks near-native British or American English or who has a distinct Estonian accent, the author of this thesis asked a native speaker of English to give his objective assessment about the accent of the interviewees' spoken English. Eric Seufert (E.S.) is from Texas, USA, and has lived in Europe for the past 5 years. He lived and studied in Estonia for 3 years and graduated from University College London in Applied Economics with an MA, as well as with a dual degree from the

University of Tartu as a result of having written his thesis about the Estonian electricity market. His expertise on the Estonian accent is reliable as he has achieved B1-level Estonian language comprehension.

3.3. The sample

E-mails were sent to all electronic lists of master's students of the faculties of the University of Tartu with an invitation to participate in the research. The Faculties of Theology, Law, Medicine, Philosophy, Exercise and Sport Sciences, Technology, Economics and Business Administration, Mathematics and Computer Science and the Faculty of Social Sciences and Education were addressed. The e-mail was written in Estonian and requested to help a fellow master's student.

3795 people received the invitation, out of which 70 responded, 47 agreed to participate and 36 completed the exercise. The interviewees were 25 master's students having studied English as a foreign language (ESP master's students) and 11 master's students having majored in the English language (EAP master's students). The average age of the interviewees was 25, the youngest being 21 year-old and the oldest 43 years old. There were 20 female and 16 male interviewees. The average age at which the participants began learning English was 9. Among the ESP master's students, there was one representative from each of the master's studies of journalism, comparative politics, mathematical statistics, computer science, psychology, general linguistics, history and educational management. Two master's students were represented from physics, economics, law and majoring in education, teachers of three subjects with one of them being English. Nine master's students were studying medicine (either 4th or 5th year). These students studied the same speciality in their BA studies.

Among the EAP master's students, eight were in the English Studies programme, six of which participated in teacher training, two in Estonian-English-Estonian interpretation studies and one in written translation. Seven master's students out of the 11 listed completed their Bachelor's studies in English Language and Literature, two in Education and Teacher of three subjects, and one person in Translation/Interpreting several years ago. Interestingly, there was one person who had studied history in his BA programme and is now doing his MA in written translation of English-Estonian.

Two interviewees' speak Russian natively, one was Finnish and 33 were Estonians. None of the interviewees had spent more than three months in an English-speaking country, nor did they speak English daily with native speakers of English.

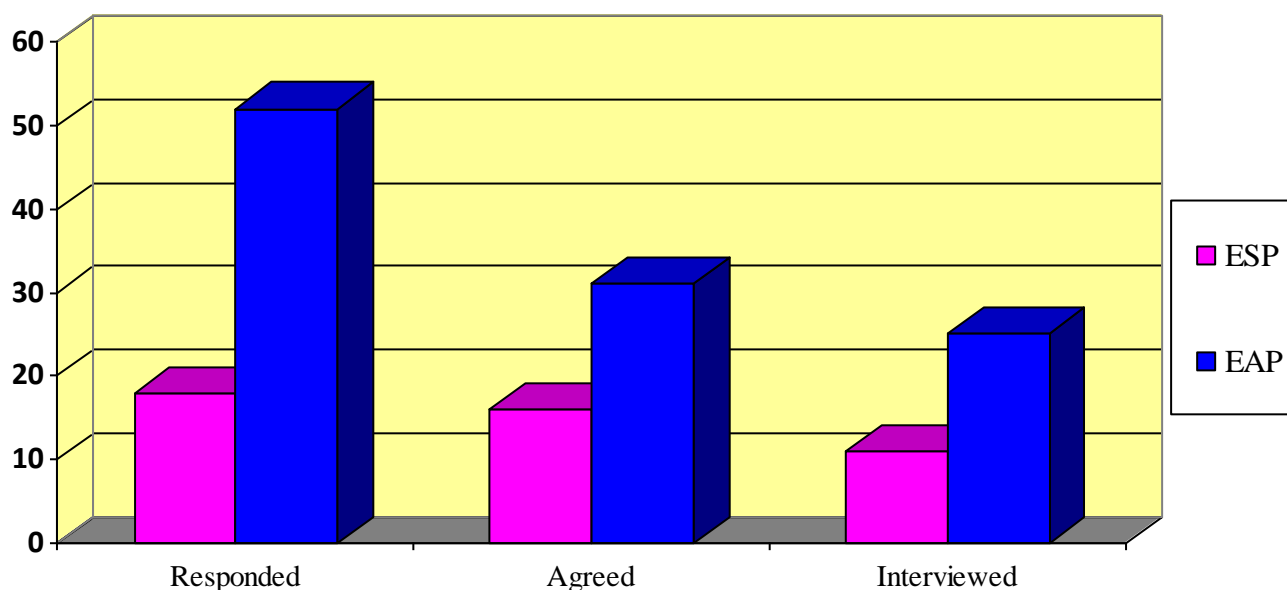


Diagramme 1. Students who responded, agreed and were eventually interviewed

3.4. Predicted results

- EAP master's students are interested and pay attention to their pronunciation of English.
- EAP master's students are aware of the main varieties of English pronunciation such as GA and RP and they make a distinct choice of which one to choose in their speech.
- ESP master's students use English regularly but they do not pay considerable attention to their pronunciation of English, yet they want to be fluent speakers of English.
- 1/3 of the interviewees' responses will include that they are satisfied with speaking in Estonian accent.
- Master's level students do not know the exact differences between the pronunciations of English varieties.
- Foreign speakers of English in Estonia prefer Standard British variety and there is a correlation between what varieties were taught and emphasized in school (not necessarily only at their gymnasium level). Presumably there is no correlation between the age at when the interviewees started studying English and how well they pronounce English.
- Master's students speak English intelligibly; however, Estonians use their native kind of intonation because Estonian pronunciation is often transferred to speaking English.
- Estonian speakers of English speak rhythmically but do not always apply English phrasing correctly.
- Interviewees are familiar with the correct use of stress in English and use it well.
- Broadly, EAP master's students are familiar with the supra-segmental features of English but do not always use them correctly. The primary goal of ESP master's students is to

speak English intelligibly, but they have disparate interpretations of what Standard English pronunciation use is about.

- Estonian speakers of English need to be taught the aspects of English pronunciation (due to the results of “they would like to speak better” and “not much attention was paid to pronunciation of English in school”).
- Gymnasium teachers of English ought to teach Estonian students the main differences between the pronunciation of the varieties GA and RP and impart upon students the importance of the prosodic aspects of English for them to be better in spoken English.

According to the expectation of the native speaker of English Eric Seufert (E.S.), Estonians have a thick Estonian accent. He believes there is no correlation between ESP and EAP master’s students and their intelligibility of pronouncing English and there will mainly be British variety used with no near-native American speakers. Expectations to have a better command of English were high (that there would be no thick Estonian accent among master’s students).

3.5. Data analysis

Question 6: Which variety of English pronunciation do you think you were taught in the gymnasium?

30 master’s students remember having been taught the British variety at the gymnasium level. 22 respondents said that it was required to use the British variety in school; eight remembered it was British, too, but it was not pressed upon them as the “correct” variety of English. Four respondents had been taught the American variety of English in their gymnasium years, one person said they were not familiarised with a specific variety and in

one case, the gymnasium students had been asked in their first years of starting to study English to make a choice of which variety they preferred using and they were corrected from that point onwards to be consistent with that variety. There is no significant difference between ESP and EAP master's students' responses.

Question 7: How much emphasis was put on the pronunciation of English in the gymnasium?

In response to the question on how much emphasis was put on the pronunciation of English in gymnasium, 15 interviewees said that the teacher corrected their pronunciation but there were no special pronunciation exercises in textbooks. Seven said that there were pronunciation exercises in a few units and they looked at them briefly, while five said they looked at them thoroughly. Eight respondents do not remember pronunciation errors being mentioned or corrected and one person out of 36 said that every unit included pronunciation exercises and a considerable amount of time was spent practising pronunciation.

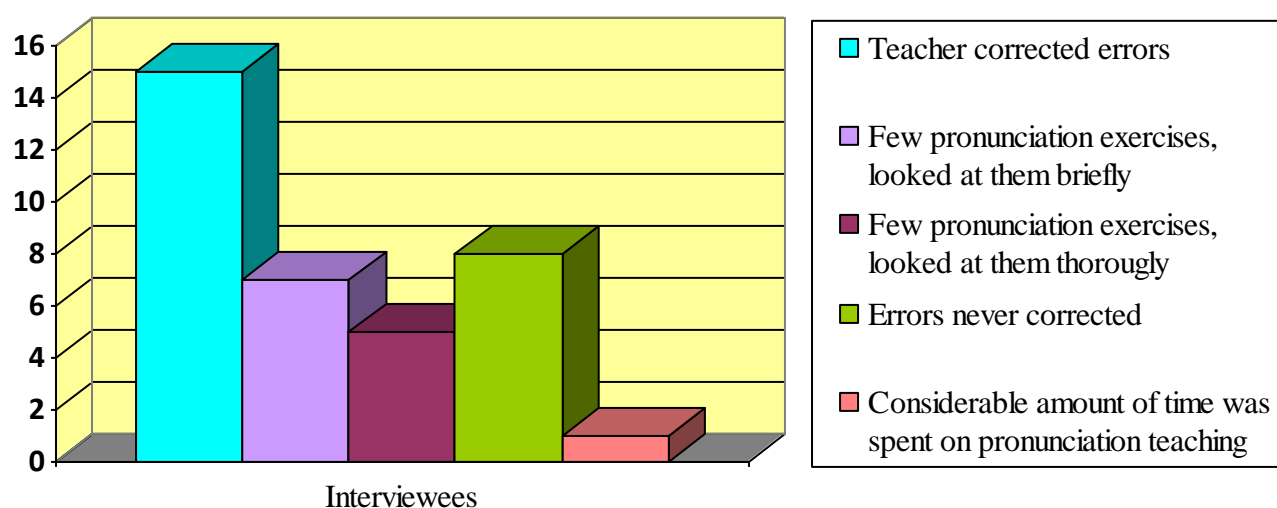


Diagramme 2. How much emphasis was put on the pronunciation of English in gymnasium?

Question 8: Which variety of English pronunciation do you think you use?

Half of those interviewed reported that they thought they use American English (18) - 14 of which were ESP master's students; 12 believed they used British English in their pronunciation and four respondents chose the option "other" with the explanation of speaking a mixture of American and British English. Four respondents supposed that their accent depended on the pronunciation of the respondents on the receiving end.

Question 9: Which variety of English pronunciation would you prefer?

In response to this question, 23 respondents said they preferred speaking British English, eight of which were EAP master's students. Only eight individuals preferred American English, one expressed a desire to speak Irish and four people said they are happy with their mixing of English varieties and with the hint of Estonian accent.

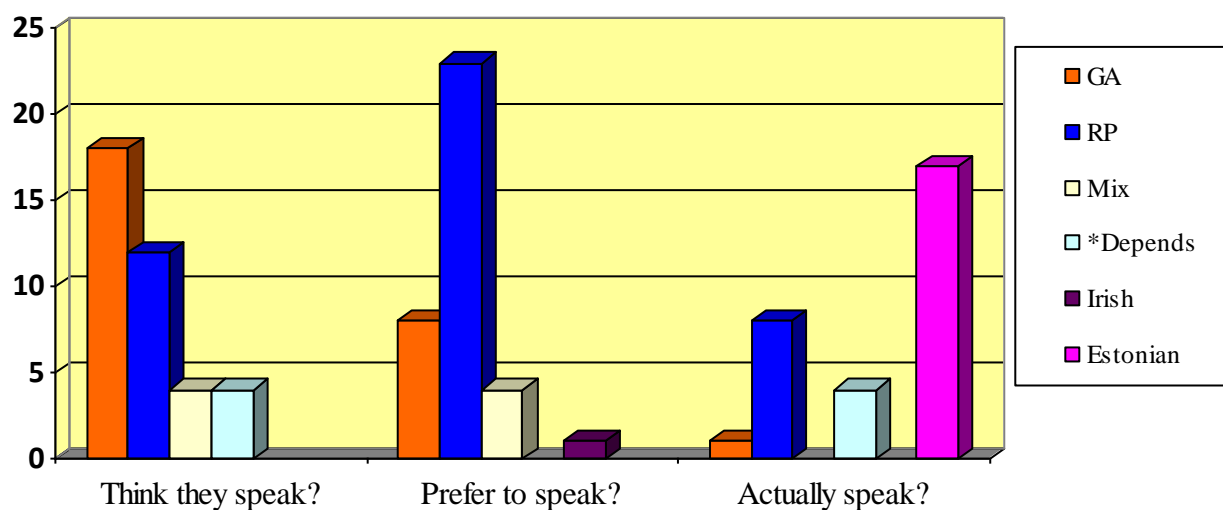


Diagramme 3. Which variety do the master's students think they speak, what they prefer to speak and what E.S. say they actually speak

**Depends on the pronunciation and origin of the audience.*

Question 10: How much attention do you pay to your pronunciation of English?

Turning to the question of how much attention was paid to their pronunciation, three respondents claimed not to care at all about their pronunciation of English, 13 wished to have better pronunciation but not much emphasis was put on that, 11 respondents wished to speak fluent British variety/accents, three wished to speak fluent American accent/variety and six chose the option of “other” with the explanation of depending on the audience or not paying attention to their own but others’ pronunciation.

It was expected that no EAP oriented master’s students said no attention was paid to their pronunciation, one reported that, since people say they do not understand his English, he feels the need to pay more attention to his spoken English. Another person said he reads texts aloud to make his pronunciation better. However, it seemed that one ESP student did not understand the difference between English pronunciation and English vocabulary because he explained how he paid attention to sounding intelligible with the correct use of lexis and grammar, not pronunciation.

Analysis of the native speaker of American English evaluation revealed eight respondents speaking with slightly British accent (four of EAP master’s students and four of ESP master’s students), and four respondents speaking in near-native British accent (one ESP and three EAP master’s students). One ESP master’s student from all the interviewees spoke in near-native American accent. As to the rest of the interviews, there were two respondents who spoke in Slavic accent, one in Finnish accent and one who had a strong accent of something but not Estonian. The latter had lived in Italy for a year and presently speak French daily, so it can be assumed that their strong accents are influenced by these foreign languages.

As to the Estonian accent, there were two respondents who spoke with a strong Estonian accent (ESP students) but remained intelligible and the rest 17 people spoke English with an Estonian accent.

With respect to the differences in ESP and EAP master's students, there seem to be more respondents among the EAP master's students who can speak with near-British and semi-British accent but there were also a third of students who spoke with an Estonian accent. Interestingly, the one person who spoke near-native American accent was an ESP master's student, majoring in general linguistics.

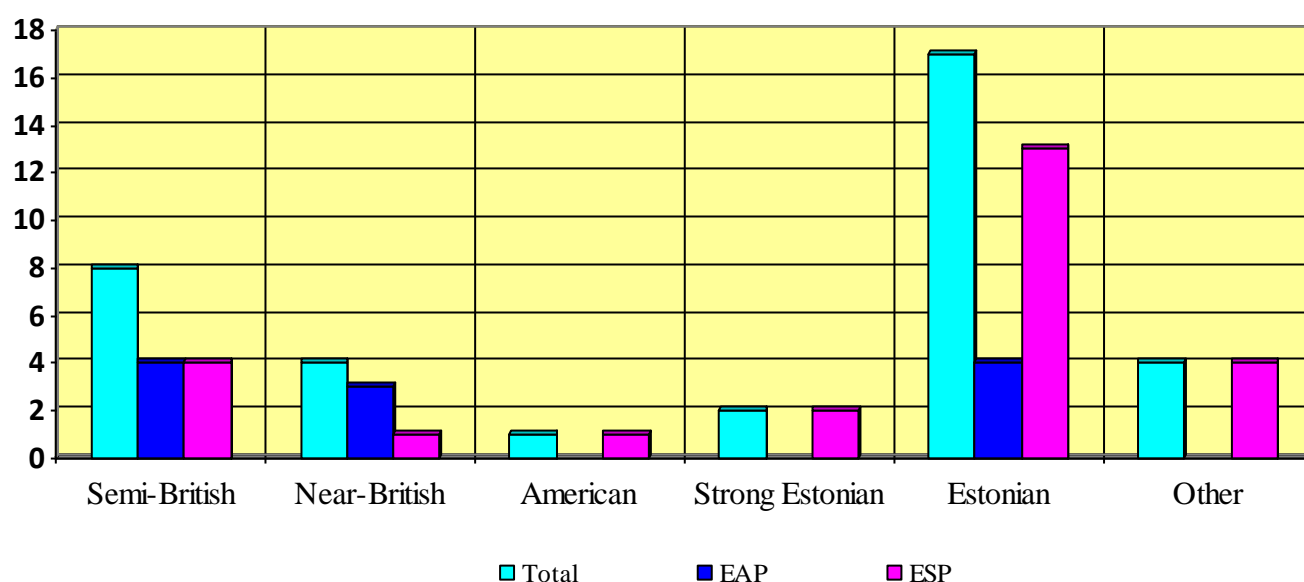


Diagramme 4. Pronunciation of English according to E.S. in terms of varieties.

Passage 1. What advice can be given to the foreign learner of English who wants to learn correct intonation? It is generally true that a few generalisations can be made concerning the functions of intonation. Within tone for example most books agree on some basic meaning. Generalisations such as these are however too broad and foreign learners do not find it easy to learn to use intonation through studying them. In short of the rules and generalisations that could be made without conveying attitudes through intonation those which are not actually wrong are likely to be too trivial to be worth learning (Roach 2000:168)

Using L. Kostabi's version of reading aloud of Passage 1, containing 27 possible pauses, and taking this as an example, the following results were found from the interviews. The use of phrasing and pauses seemed to be the least known aspect of using supra-segmentals in English pronunciation. The tempo of the readers varied but pausing was still detectable. On average there were 14 pauses used out of 27 possible pauses including both EAP and ESP master's students' results. The results were similar for both EAP and ESP master's students. The most correct performance on the use of pausing was made by an ESP master's student with 18 correct pauses out of 27 and the least correct text was read by two respondents, getting only 10 answers correct out of 27. The number of respondents and the correct usage of pauses were according:

- one person correct in 17 cases
- six respondents correct in 16 cases
- 10 respondents correct in 15 cases
- seven respondents correct in 14 cases
- five respondents correct in 13 cases
- two respondents correct in 12 cases
- two respondents correct in 11 cases

- two respondents correct in 10 cases

There were no incorrect uses of pausing in less than 10 instances.

There were 324 possible pauses of which 175 (54%) were used and 149 (46%) were not. Nevertheless, out of the 648 necessary pauses in the text, in total they were used correctly in 68% (510) of the expected cases. The analysis did not consider used pauses in possible cases as incorrect. To sum it all up, the interviewees used pauses correctly in 52 % of cases.

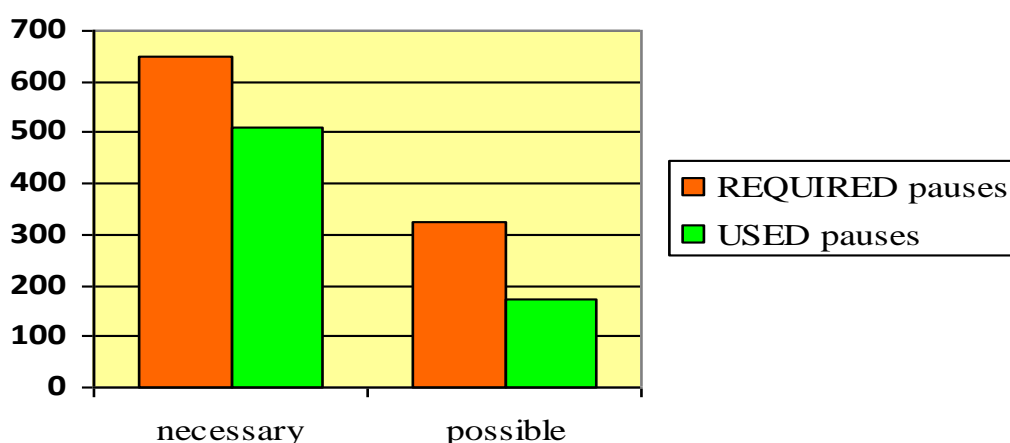


Diagramme 5. Necessary and possible pauses and their actual use

As far as intonation is concerned, its use was not what was predicted, as not a single person used intonation fully correctly. The average performance of intonation was in total nine times correct, with the exception of 7.2 cases by EAP master's students and 9.8 cases correct on average by ESP master's students. In total, intonation units were used correctly in 69% of the passage. Out of 22 units, the best result amounted to getting 16 tone units correct by an ESP master's student. The least correct use of intonation was performed by an EAP student with 19 wrong uses out of 22 possible tone units, who in fact was assessed as one of

the four near-native British speakers by E.S. The same result came from one of the ESP master's students as well, getting 19 answers wrong.

In more detail, considering the 36 respondents interviewed, there were 792 intonation-wise correct answers of which 41% (324) were correct and 59% (468) wrong. Conclusively it can be said that rising tone and levelling was used in more cases than was expected. In a broader perspective, together with 36 interviewees there were 3996 segments divided into 792 smaller units with the necessity to use rising tone in 1332 cases but the actual use was slightly more- in 1373 cases. Falling-tone was to be used 61% of the expected cases (supposed to be used in 1152 cases but was instead used only 700) and levelling was used slightly over the normal cases – 1534 cases out of 1512. It is important to note that this result does not show the correct cases where rising, falling or levelling tones were used.

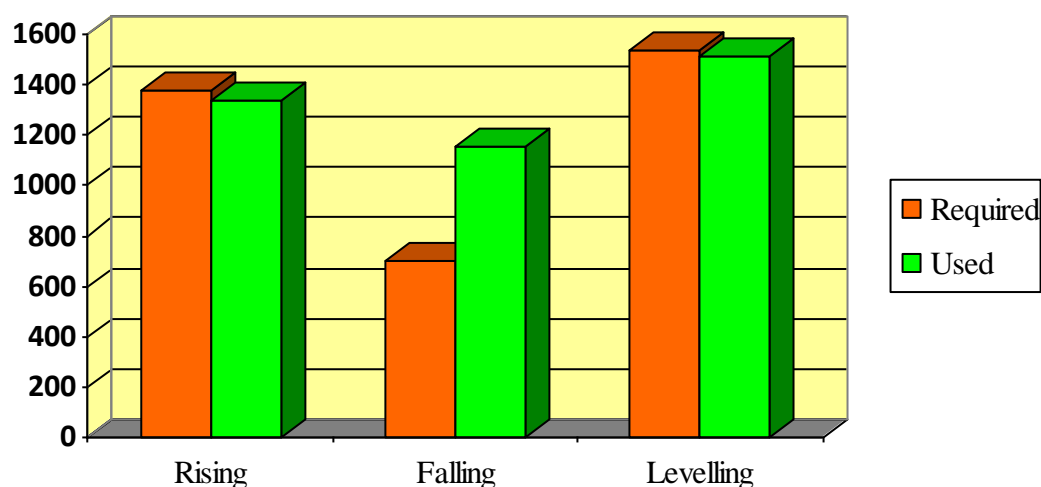
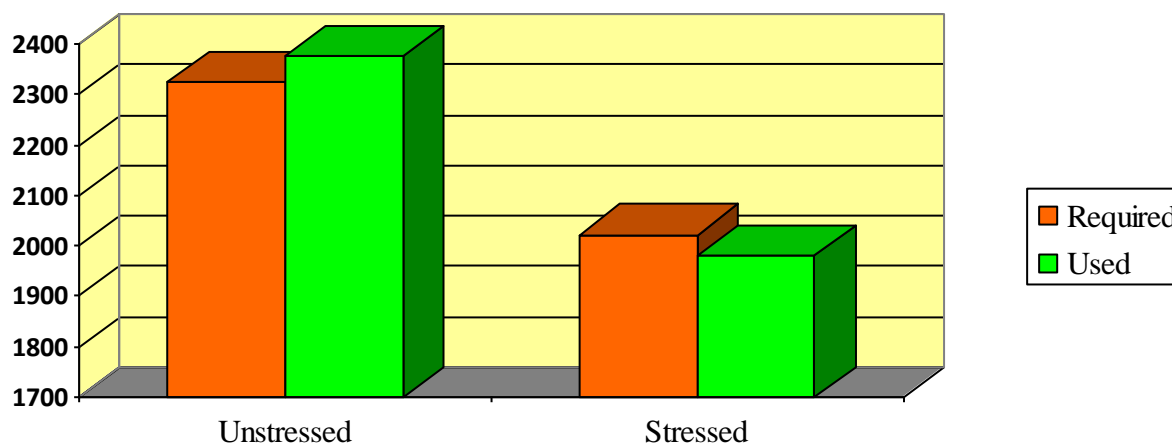


Diagramme 6. Required use of rising tone, falling tone and levelling and the actual use

According to the results of the research, the proper use of rhythm is not a big problem among NNS of English in Estonia with the result of using stress in correct places in 89% of the possible cases. As is generally known, rhythm depends on the proper use of stressed and unstressed syllables in sentences. On average the use of rhythm was correct in 27 cases out of 31 (concluding both EAP and ESP master's students' results). 100% correct performances were given by two ESP master's students and 3 EAP master's students. Given that each polysyllable phrase has both stressed and unstressed syllables that are to be uttered, unstressed pronunciation in this case was used in more cases than was required, resulting in the overuse of 2% of the expected segments of 100% (2376 cases out of 2324) that were united into 31 units and stressed utterances in 98% of the correct segments (1980 cases out of 2022). Considering the average correct percentage of the applied stress, it can be said that these errors were rare and that the master's students used stressed and unstressed syllables more or



less properly.

Diagramme 7. Required use of stressed and unstressed syllables and the actual use

Passage 2.

1. Children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult.
2. His acting debut was made at a small London theatre in 1939.
3. You can download the brochure by clicking on the 'open' link below.
4. The problem occurs when householders want to demolish an old garage.
5. Seasonal flu vaccine will not protect against pandemic flu.
6. Cigarette smoker has two to three times the risk of having a heart attack than a non-smoker.
7. This poetry magazine of the period featured most of the UK and the US writers.
8. Can you please dictate the last sentence once again.
9. It is possible to donate blood at the festival next month.
10. Migrate existing accounts to that domain.
11. Rotate in opposite directions.
12. Investigation will usually start with a report to the hospital blood transfusion laboratory.
13. Our website provides banner advertisements to third party sites.
14. There is not a single dancer in that company of native training who I think is fit to dance in this ballet.
15. What is the address of the museum?

Interviewees used the stress indication of GA and RP variants randomly without any pattern. There were no master's students who read the sentences consistently using one variety. Out of 36 readers, 29 used near-GA for more than half of the cases, resulting in 81% and the use of near-RP in 19% of the respondents. In total, GA was used in 330 times (63%) and RP in 209 (37%) out of the 540, noting that one word was read out incorrectly – instead of the word *advertisement* it was read as *advisement* and therefore it cannot be taken into account of the result.

In total, the average use of GA was 9.2 cases and RP in 5.7 cases out of 15 possible options. The most consistent was an ESP master's student, using GA in 13 cases and interestingly it was not the same person who was assessed by E.S. to be speaking near-GA accent. Four respondents used GA in 12 cases. RP was most correct in 11 cases by an ESP master's student and in 10 cases by another ESP master's student. The EAP master's students

used GA on average in 8.7 cases and RP in 6.3 cases, indicating confusion over the difference between GA and RP even among students who were majoring in the English language in their studies.

3.6. The discussion of results

On the basis of this interview, it seems that more time should be spent on teaching English prosody in Estonian schools. This conclusion is derived from the fact that 22 respondents said that they did not remember pronunciation errors having ever been corrected or been corrected mildly by a teacher, yet there were 24 respondents claiming they would like to have better pronunciation, either American or British. There were no participants fully satisfied with their Estonian accent, contrary to the prediction of 1/3 of the interviewees' responses being satisfied with speaking in Estonian accent.

Based on the results, 27 students want to be fluent in English and therefore pay attention to their spoken English. A conclusion can be drawn that both EAP and ESP master's students are interested in and pay attention to their pronunciation of English, contrary to the prediction of ESP master's students not being interested in their pronunciation.

Looking at the results in more detail, only seven respondents said that pronunciation exercises that existed in textbooks had been looked at briefly. In total, six respondents out of 36 said they had been given enough knowledge about English pronunciation, yet even they claimed they would like to have better pronunciation of English. Interestingly, though, these students said they spent a considerable amount of time thinking about their pronunciation, one reading English texts out loud regularly.

The performance of master's students depends on more factors than just teaching-learning continuum, however. As with singing, there are people who continue singing out of tune, notwithstanding how many singing lessons they complete, so may be the case with foreign language pronunciation. To illustrate the statement, examples can be given about the one person admitting that in her gymnasium years, every unit had pronunciation exercises and a considerable amount of time had been spent on that. And interestingly, this person was assessed as a person speaking with an Estonian accent, by our objective expert E.S. The only person E.S. assessed to have near-native GA accent said her teacher corrected her pronunciation in class without having any exercises in the textbooks. The near-native British speakers in two cases had been corrected by their gymnasium English teacher, and the other two did not remember pronunciation errors being mentioned. This indicates that there is little correlation between the fluency of near-native speaking of English and the amount of time pronunciation was taught in class, however, it can be concluded that more help is generally needed with pronunciation of English in order to have a correlation between these aspects.

Moreover, continuing with the expectations and findings by the native speaker's assessment, it turns out that these results are different from what was expected – only 4 people spoke with a near-native British pronunciation – fewer than anticipated. Surprisingly, there was one person able to speak near-native GA. Contrary to the expectations of the author of this thesis – supposing that there were more students satisfied speaking with Estonian accent – the native-speaker expected fewer respondents to be speaking with an Estonian accent. On the contrary, no respondent indicated being happy with an Estonian accent and only 13 respondents did not have a strong accent (mainly Estonian).

Concerning the prosodic aspects of pronunciation, there seems to be little known about the effect proper use of rhythm, intonation and phrasing have on the speakers' performance. Although the prediction was that Estonian speakers of English speak rhythmically but do not always apply English phrasing correctly, with the results as indicated by 69% of correct answers in intonation use, 89% of rhythm use and 52% of proper phrasing, a better knowledge of English supra-segmental features is necessitated. Even in case of EAP master's students' studies, they are not fully familiar with the supra-segmental features of English and indeed do not always use them correctly. ESP master's students' main goal to speak English intelligibly is accurate as expected, but they have somewhat different understanding of what a *standard* in English pronunciation is by commenting that they prefer speaking mixed GA and RP calling that the *standard* by all four respondents.

The results of the intonation test may also come from the urge of master's students to speak near-native English as they are supposed to master an advanced level of English, and therefore they perhaps think about their pronunciation (in this case intonation) too much which often may lead to poor results. It seems, though, that the pitch movement was not ignored because the number of rises and falls was sufficient. Yet, they were not always appropriately applied. The lack of levelling might indicate the possible effect of the more monotonous pronunciation of Estonian in comparison to English but nonetheless, master's students apply English pitch movement correctly.

It can be considered as satisfactory how aware the master's students are of English rhythm. Since the reading tempo here was different in comparison to reading out Passage 1, to some extent it seemed that the interviewees tried to speak more vividly because of the nature of the interview and therefore paused less. On the other hand, this could cause the same effect

in any other academic text and thus there are difficulties in making themselves understandable because of lack of pauses in the required places.

Nevertheless, since Estonians are exposed to different varieties of English, it is no surprise that the varieties of GA and RP are not used consistently, with 81% of respondents using GA and 19% RP, as can be seen on the basis of Passage 2. However, 50% interviewees *think* they use GA and actually in total 81% use it, indicating the influence GA has placed on the NNS of English in Estonia and in fact people use GA-biased pronunciation more than they believe. 39% think they use near-RP and in fact only 19% use it, showing that people use RP less than they suppose which leads us to conclude they are not aware of the features that distinguish RP from GA and it indeed should be taught more in school.

However, the claim of foreign speakers of English in Estonia who prefer British variety turns out to be accurate and there is indeed a correlation as to which varieties were consistently taught and emphasized in school and which turned out to be preferred later. Moreover, the average age when starting to study English being nine years old and having no correlation between the appropriate use of supra-segmentals and age level, indicates that the author predicted correctly the lack of correlation between the age at when the interviewees started studying English and how well they pronounce English.

The prediction about EAP master's students being aware of the main differences in the varieties of English was, however, incorrect and even though the master's students claim they make a distinct choice about which they use, they are unable to be consistent in one variety, due to little training in school. Indeed, master's students do not know the common differences between the pronunciations of English varieties. Thus, especially gymnasium teachers of English ought to teach Estonian students the main differences between the pronunciation of

GA and RP and make students realise the importance of the prosodic aspects of English for them to become better in pronouncing English.

Based on these results of the use of GA-biased and RP-biased pronunciation, we can observe the proper use of stress as the fourth prosodic feature which this thesis addresses. Since the GA and RP differences depend on the use of stress in the selected words in the 15 separate sentences, we can also observe the master's students' opinions about which variety of English they think they use (question 8) and compare it to the use of GA and RP stress pattern in Passage 2.

The results show that among EAP master's students, there were seven respondents who think they use British English but had actually used RP in less than seven cases out of 15. This reveals that they are not aware of the features of RP. Three respondents admitted they speak GA, but in fact only used GA in 10 cases out of 15. Of the ESP master's students, on the other hand, 14 think they use GA and the average use of GA is 10 cases out of 15. RP is thought to be used by seven individuals but in 7.8 cases of 15 possible cases on average it was in fact used. This indicates that the use of GA is more consistent than the use of RP. It can be concluded that the interviewees are not fully aware of the proper use of stress in spoken English which disproves the prediction that people tend to use GA-based pronunciation more.

Some other interesting findings appeared during the course of the interview. There were 4 master's students (ESP) who could not pronounce the word *foreign*, replacing the first-syllable stress with the second-syllable one. Moreover, there was one ESP master's student who found that the only possibility to pronounce *garage* is the British way with the first-syllable stress, which in her pronunciation made it sound like a *carriage*.

In conclusion it can be seen that interest in English pronunciation is considerable among both EAP and ESP master's students. Due to the poor results in the analysis of proper use of prosodic features of English and the lack of consistency in GA and RP use, it seems obvious that more emphasis is required on the teaching of English before specialising in the university years.

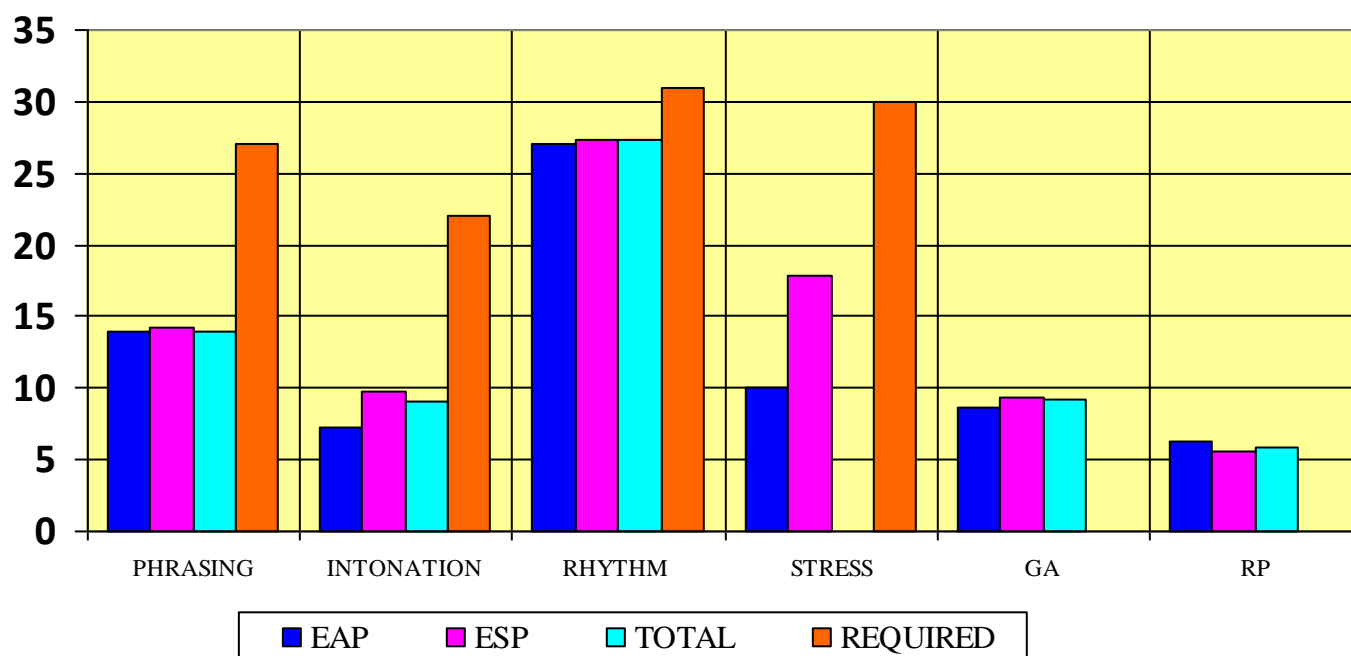


Diagramme 8: Average performance of the prosodic features performed by 36 individuals

CONCLUSION

Estonian speakers of English wish to speak fluent English with intelligible pronunciation. Aspects of pronunciation, such as vowel or consonant articulation, stress, rhythm, intonation etc. are expected to be obtained during their studies prior to master's programmes at universities. There seems to be the obvious need for learning prosodic aspects of pronunciation. Comfortably intelligible spoken English assumes good pronunciation, however, in many cases a NNS could confuse the listeners by using incorrect pronunciation, in particular, supra-segmental features. Pronunciation mistakes could result in misunderstanding the message owing to mispronunciation, hyper-foreignism and other possible errors among NNS of English. However, students are quite capable of obtaining the proper use of prosodic features.

Since the prosodic features of English pronunciation express the ways in which English pronunciation is perceived in terms of the use of stress, rhythm, pitch range and direction and pausing, the research aimed at getting to know the use of elements related to the pronunciation of either RP or GA. Thus, while researching on the students' capability of using these features, it is interesting to learn what their experiences in studying English pronunciation are and whether there is any need for teachers of English to pay more attention to the teaching of pronunciation with the emphasis on the supra-segmental features.

Concentrating mainly on the pronunciation of supra-segmental features of English among Estonians, this research was carried out with 36 UT master's students. In order to find out the level of the use of English alongside the experiences and preferences, interviews consisting of a spontaneous conversation and two reading passages were held with the

master's students. The study aimed at finding out the use of supra-segmental features of English pronunciation and preferences of English pronunciation varieties.

Concerning the aims of this research, emphasis was mainly put on the prosodic features. It seems important, though, to be aware of the use of all aspects of English pronunciation. It would be interesting to find out the use of both segment-based and supra-segmentals in English and perhaps including more native-speakers assessments in the evaluation of English pronunciation in Estonia. Learning that, a teacher's book including all these teaching aspects could be created.

It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for a foreign speaker of English to acquire or learn the pronunciation similar to a native speaker. However, the general issues that the Estonian students face in English pronunciation, brought out in this, as well as previous, research papers (for example, Kostabi 1994, Asu 1997 and Kull 2006) could be used as a reference for the teachers of English for compiling suitable materials for teaching English pronunciation to Estonian students. Hopefully, this will help to raise the students' pronunciation skills from the very good to the excellent level.

According to the results of the study, it seems that Estonian students are not very well familiar with the use of supra-segmentals in their spoken English. Master's students, who major in English and constantly use English (EAP), pay a considerable amount of time on self-correcting and observing their own and others' pronunciation. Taking into account the results of the thesis, the attitude towards studying English pronunciation is positive and students mostly wish to have more knowledge about the prosodic features as well as varieties of English.

On the basis of the interviews, it seems that more time should be spent on the teaching of English pronunciation in Estonian schools. This conclusion is deduced from the fact that one third of the respondents did not remember that pronunciation errors were ever corrected or were corrected mildly by the teacher. Yet, there were almost as many responses claiming they would like to have better pronunciation, either American or British. There were no participants fully satisfied with their Estonian accent and as it turned out, students want to be fluent in English and therefore pay attention to their pronunciation.

It appeared to be true that foreign speakers of English in Estonia prefer the British variety. In addition, there is a definite correlation between what varieties were consistently taught and emphasized in school and what was preferred in their later use of English. The most preferred variety in Estonia has been British English (RP). Although, theoretically RP is the standard of English taught in Estonia, today its actual use is not observed. Moreover, the finding that 50% of the interviewees supposed they used GA and actually in total 81% of the entire sample used it, indicates the influence GA has exerted on the NNS's English in Estonia and in fact respondents use GA-biased pronunciation more often than they suppose. The fact that 39% of the sample supposed their use of near-RP and in fact only 19% used it, shows that RP is used less than supposed. This leads us to conclude that the respondents are not aware of the features that distinguish RP and GA and it indeed should be taught more specifically in school.

However, students obtain factors such as prosody through integrated language learning, too. In this thesis, the native-speaker's expertise in assessing the accents of the interviewees, revealed that there seems to be no real consistency in using American or British accent among Estonians. Out of 36 people from the sample, there was only one person able to

produce near-native GA and four with near-native RP. These results may come from the fact that although half the interviewees supposed they used GA, and in fact 81% did, and indicate that there is no good knowledge about pronunciation varieties offered in school.

Based on theoretical considerations of use and importance of prosodic features, it seems that with the results as shown by 69% of correct answers in intonation use, 89% of rhythm use and 52% of proper phrasing, a better knowledge of English supra-segmental features in Estonia is required. The unexpectedly low results of the use of all prosodic features may also originate from the urge of master's students to speak near-native English (especially considering the nature of the interview) as they are supposed to master an advanced level of English and therefore worry about their pronunciation too much, in this case leading to poor results.

However, the lack of levelling shown in the results of the interviews might indicate the possible effect the less regulated high-low key pronunciation of Estonian in comparison to that of English but, all in all, master's students can be said to speak comfortably intelligible English. It seemed that in terms of rhythm, the interviewees tried to speak more vividly because of the nature of the interview and therefore there were fewer pauses than usual in their speech. On the other hand, this could cause the same effect in reading aloud any other academic text and thus there are difficulties in making themselves understandable because of lack of pauses in the required tone-unit boundaries.

In conclusion it can be seen that the interest in English pronunciation is considerable among master's students in Estonia. Generalising the results, it seems that teachers of English in Estonia should concentrate more on pronunciation aspects of English, not ignoring the differences between GA and RP and the proper use of stress, rhythm, intonation and phrasing.

The author of this thesis suggests that teachers of English in Estonia create and follow a structured programme, including the main aspects of prosody in every unit and occasionally have separate exercises on the difference of accents. Moreover, in terms of reading and listening exercises in school, it would be recommended to help students self-assess and – monitor their use of the rising-levelling-falling tunes, rhythmical stressing in utterances and recognizing pauses in texts where in-text punctuation marks are missing. This kind of practice would make English speakers in Estonia more confident in their spoken English.

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APPENDIX 1. The interview

Please read the following questions and think about your answers. Prepare the answers in order to discuss them in live recorded conversation.

1. Age:.....
2. Gender:.....
3. Field of study and which year of study:.....
4. What did you study in your BA studies?.....
5. When did you start studying English? (Please add the form and your age)
6. Which variety of English pronunciation do you think you were taught in the gymnasium?

a.) American	d.) Scottish	g.) other
b.) British	e.) Irish	
c.) Australian	f.) Welsh	
7. How much emphasis was put on the pronunciation of English in the gymnasium?

a.) every unit included pronunciation exercises and we spent a considerable amount of time practising pronunciation
b.) pronunciation exercises were in a few units, we looked through them thoroughly
c.) pronunciation exercises were in a few units, we looked at them briefly
d.) the teacher corrected the pronunciation, there were no special pronunciation exercises in textbooks
e.) I do not remember pronunciation errors being mentioned or corrected
f.) Other

8. Which variety of English pronunciation do you think you use?

- | | | |
|----------------|--------------|----------------|
| a.) American | d.) Scottish | g.) other..... |
| b.) British | e.) Irish | |
| c.) Australian | f.) Welsh | |

9. Which variety of English pronunciation would you prefer?

- | | | |
|----------------|--------------|-----------------|
| a.) American | d.) Scottish | g.) other |
| b.) British | e.) Irish | |
| c.) Australian | f.) Welsh | |

10. How much attention do you pay to your pronunciation of English?

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| a.) I don't care about pronunciation | e.) I want to speak fluent American |
| b.) I would like to have better | accent/variety |
| pronunciation but I am not putting | d.) I am satisfied with speaking in Estonian |
| much emphasis on that | accent |
| c.) I want to speak fluent British | e.) other |
| accent/variety | |

Read the following two passages and prepare to read them out loud. Please note that there are no punctuation marks included in the sentences.

Passage 1. What advice can be given to the foreign learner of English who wants to learn correct intonation? It is generally true that a few generalisations can be made concerning the functions of intonation. Within tone for example most books agree on some basic meaning. Generalisations such as these are however too broad and foreign learners do not find it easy to learn to use intonation through studying them. In short of the rules and generalisations that

could be made without conveying attitudes through intonation those which are not actually wrong are likely to be too trivial to be worth learning (Roach, P)

Passage 2.

1. Children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult.
2. His acting debut was made at a small London theatre in 1939.
3. You can download the brochure by clicking on the ' open ' link below.
4. The problem occurs when householders want to demolish an old garage.
5. Seasonal flu vaccine will not protect against pandemic flu.
6. Cigarette smoker has two to three times the risk of having a heart attack than a non-smoker.
7. This poetry magazine of the period featured most of the UK and the US writers.
8. Can you please dictate the last sentence once again.
9. It is possible to donate blood at the festival next month.
10. Migrate existing accounts to that domain.
11. Rotate in opposite directions.
12. Investigation will usually start with a report to the hospital blood transfusion laboratory.
13. Our website provides banner advertisements to third party sites.
14. There is not a single dancer in that company of native training who I think is fit to dance in this ballet.
15. What is the address of the museum?

RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL

INGLISE FILOLOOGIA OSAKOND

Päivi Pütsepp

ENG: On the use of supra-segmental features of English and preferences of English varieties in Estonia with special reference to the master's students of the University of Tartu

EST: Inglise keele prosoodiliste elementide kasutamine ning inglise keele variantide eelistus Eestis Tartu Ülikooli magistrantide näite põhjal

Magistritöö

2013

Lehekülgede arv: 64

Annotatsioon

Käesoleva magistritöö eesmärgiks on teada saada, kuidas Tartu Ülikooli magistrandid kasutavad inglise keele prosoodilisi aspekte milleks on rütm, rõhuasetus, intonatsioon ja pausid. Lisaks eelnevale on soov teada saada magistrantide häälduseelistusi seoses inglise keele erinevate aktsentidega, milleks on enamasti briti või ameerika aktsent, millega eestlased igapäevaselt kokku puutuvad. Viimaseks eesmärgiks on huvitav leida, millist aktsenti magistrandid ise arvavad rääkivat ja mida nad tegelikult räägivad. Kõige selle tulemuseks on soov teada saada, kas eesti koolides peaksid õpetajad rohkem tähelepanu pöörama inglise keele hääldamise õpetamisele, sealhulgas prosoodiale.

Magistritöö on jaotatud neljaks osaks, mis sisaldab sissejuhatust, teoreetilist osa kahe peatükiga, empiirilist analüüsi tulemuse aruteluga ning kokkuvõtet. Sissejuhatus annab mõningase ülevaate inglise keele hääldamise olulisusest ning tutvustab sarnadel teemal

varasemalt Tartu Ülikooli inglise filoloogia osakonnas sooritatud uurimuste tulemusi. Teooria esimene peatükk selgitab inglise keele häälduse prosoodilisi aspekte, milleks on rütm, rõhuasetus, intonatsioon ja pauside kasutamine. Teine peatükk tutvustab prosoodiliste aspektide erinevust inglise keele erinevate aktsentide suhtes. Empiiriline analüüs keskendub intervjuu ülesehitusele, läbiviimisele ning tulemuste analüüsile. Kokkuvõte sõnastab uurimustöö olulisimad tulemid ning soovitusi edasisteks uurimusteks.

Magistritöö eesmärkide saavutamiseks intervjueris töö autor 36 Tartu Ülikooli magistranti, kellega viidi läbi spontaanne inglise keelne vestlus inglise keele õppimise kohta, mis koosnes 10 küsimusest eesmärgiga koguda infot magistrantide kogemusest inglise keele häälduse õppimisel ning missugust inglise keele aktsenti intervjueritavad eelistavad ja tegelikult kasutavad. Lisaks paluti lugeda inglise-keelne katkend Peter Roach'i õpikust, millest eemaldati lausesisesed kirjavahemärgid, et selgitada välja ettevalmistamata lugemisel pauside kasutamine. Kolmandaks intervjuu osaks oli 15 eraldiseisvat lauset, mis sisaldasid rõhuasetuslikke viiteid ühe või teise inglise keele variandi kasutuse suhtes (Briti või Ameerika). Objektiivse hinnangu intervjueritavate inglise keele aktsendi kohta andis Texase osariigist pärit ameeriklane Eric Seufert, kes on Eestis elanud ja õppinud 3 aastat ning kelle eesti keele tase on B1.

Uurimuse tulemus näitas, et valimis osalenud TÜ magistrandid ei oska väga hästi kasutada inglise keele rütmi, rõhuasetust, intonatsiooni ega pause. Rütmi-järgiv keelekasutus oli neljast aspektist kõige osavam, kuid intonatsiooni, rõhu ja pauside kasutamist peab õpilastele veel oluliselt õpetama. Valimis osalenutest enamus teatasid, et inglise keele õpetamisel ei ole palju rõhku pandud hääldamise õpetamisele, kuid enamus soovib omada paremat inglise keele hääldust. Sellest võib järeldada, et inglise keele hääldusele, eriti

prosoodiale peab koolis rohkem rõhku panema. Lisaks prosoodiale selgus, et suur osa magistrantidest soovib kõneleda Briti aktsendiga, kuid vaid neli inimest valdab seda emakeele taseme lähedaselt. 18 õpilast arvab, et kõneleb ameerika aktsendiga, mil 89% valimis osalenutest kaldub pigem ameerika aktsendi kasutamise poole. Vaid üks üliõpilane kõneleb märgatava Ameerika aktsendiga. Kõike arvesse võttes saab töö autor rahul olla läbi viidud uurimustöö tulemustega. Püstitatud eesmärgid täideti ning tulevane soovitus inglise keele õpetajatele on võimalik edastada.

Märksõnad:

Inglise keel, hääldamine, häälduseelised, prosoodia, rütm, rõhk, rõhuasetus, intonatsioon, paus, fraasid, inglise keele variandid, magistriõpe, aktsent

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